

Calvary Chapel O'Hare
Men's
Servant Leadership Study

Week 11

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Memory Verse for the Week: 2 Timothy 1:7

Day 1 – Self-Discipline

Reading - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Discussion - The apostle Paul understood the importance of discipline. In this passage he emphasized that as followers of Christ our spiritual lives form the core of our character. As we spend time in the disciplines of the spirit, we're to be like runners or boxers. During the course of a race, runners don't stagger from one lane to another. They rivet their attention on the finish line and run a disciplined race toward it. So also boxers train with purpose so they can absorb powerful blows without falling down. They build up their physical stamina so that their legs will hold out for the final rounds.

Paul equates self-discipline in spiritual matters to the self-discipline used by an athlete preparing to run a race. Godly leaders need to cultivate this same kind of spiritual fitness. Doing so can and will affect other areas of leadership life – how we treat others, where we go for answers to major decisions, and the skills we use in accomplishing our daily tasks.

If you want to be an effective leader, identify the habits you need to build into your life so you can lead with diligence – habits such as physical fitness, balance between work and home, financial and personal accountability, proactivity in the workplace, and the like. Strap on your shoes and get going. Disciplined habits will give you the momentum you need to not only move forward, but also to run your earthly race with strength and purpose. Read this passage again to see how this amazing man disciplined his life so magnificently that he became God's champion.

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1. In verse 24 & 25, Paul equates self-discipline in spiritual matters to the self-discipline used by an athlete preparing to run a race. Why? _____

2. What area(s) are of your life (or habits as described above) could be improved upon by exercising self-discipline? _____

Day 2 - Self-Discipline and Who God Is

History has repeatedly witnessed the combination of great power without moral restraint, and the results have always been disastrous. How reassuring to know that the ultimate power behind all things is also the supreme source of good who demonstrates patience and mercy toward humanity. Look at Jeremiah 18:1-12 to see God's loving forbearance and restraint in action.

Reading Jeremiah 18:1-12

Discussion - This passage in Jeremiah gives us a keen insight into God's dealings with His people. In spite of the spiritual and moral rebellion of His people, the Lord offered to avert the disaster of impending judgment if His people would only repent and return to Him. In His eleventh-hour appeal, God told the people of Judah through His prophet Jeremiah that He could reshape the day of their destiny. Instead of uprooting and destroying them, God wanted to build up and establish them, but He would not do so unless they repented of their evil and disobedience (v.11). Sadly, the prophet could predict with certainty that the people of Judah would stubbornly turn down the Lord's gracious offer.

The Lord is compassionate, gracious and slow to anger (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8). His perfect patience and forbearance are evident throughout the Scriptures and exemplify the essence of perfect self-discipline. His willingness to endure and to forgive our frequent acts of disobedience is nothing short of amazing.

1. The Lord is not slow, but patient in keeping His promise, desiring all people to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). What does this verse tell you about God's self-discipline?

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2. How you can reflect this kind of self-discipline in your dealings with others? _____

Day 3 - Self-Discipline and Who I Am

Composure, presence of mind, coolheadedness, patience, self-possession, restraint – only a few people display these qualities, and those who do usually make effective leaders. People who demonstrate the fruit of self-control are productive, dependable and influential. Go to 2 Timothy 1:7 and the note below to study Paul’s exhortation to his coworker Timothy.

Reading - 2 Timothy 1:7

Discussion - Because of Timothy’s natural inclination to timidity, Paul was prompted to encourage his fellow worker to maintain a holy boldness and assurance in his position of spiritual leadership. Paul had commissioned Timothy to oversee many of the churches in the Roman province of Asia, and this task required a spirit characterized by power, love, and self-discipline. Self-discipline is needed to stretch us beyond our own comfort zones and areas of personal inertia. For some, the needed discipline will be more in the realm of the emotions; for others the focus of self-control will be in the realm of the mind or of the will.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul listed the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). While people without Christ can exercise self-control, this quality in its fullest expression of character transformation is a part of the spiritual fruit that only the Holy Spirit can produce in us.

Self-discipline is seldom easy. Paul’s words to Timothy revealed that this young man probably struggled with it in his ministry. And most leaders who come across the need for more self-discipline in their lives struggle at times as well. But read Paul’s instruction to Timothy again in this passage, and let it sink in and empower you in areas in which you most need help. God’s spirit is the power source behind self-discipline. Timothy evidently found that out, and so can you.

1. Take some time and meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7. Since God has given us spirit of Self-discipline, then why do we (you) have trouble with self-discipline in our (your) lives?

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2. What steps can you take to tap into the spirit of self-discipline God has given you?

Day 4 - Self-Discipline and How I Think

Self-discipline may be defined simply as that quality that allows a person to do what needs to be done when he or she doesn't feel like doing it. From that basic working definition we look at an example of a woman who exhibited great self-discipline in her own life, and reaped the rewards of her efforts. Read Proverbs 31:10-31 for today's study.

Reading - Proverbs 31:10-31

Discussion - Much of leadership success comes about by simply doing what no one else is willing to do: toughing it out, risking an opinion, making a decision when everyone else is paralyzed by uncertainty. In many situations other people know what to do, but are too tired or afraid or apathetic to act. That's when someone who is equally tired and equally afraid steps forward and does what's needed. This person has that elusive quality called self-discipline. And whether from a formal or inform position in the organization, that person provides leadership.

Self-discipline may be defined simply at that quality that allows a person to do what needs to be done when he or she doesn't feel like doing it. Some of self-discipline's attributes are demonstrated by the "wife of noble character" described in Proverbs 31:10-31. She may be a literal woman, or she may be Wisdom personified. Either way she teaches some important things about self-discipline and leadership. As you read through the following list, think about how you can integrate some of her character traits into your own life as a leader.

A person who disciplines his or her character is one who

- is noble and greatly valued (v.10).
- gets the job done regardless of what it takes, and has the full confidence of others (v.11).
- works hard enough to make a profit (vv.11-15).
- delays gratification and pleasure to invest his or her profits and then tirelessly works his or her investments for maximum return (vv.16-19).

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- generously participates in the larger community by sharing his or her profits with the needy (v.20).
- has no fear of the future (vv.21-27).
- is honored, respected, admired, praised and rewarded (vv.28-31).

1. Take time throughout the day to review and contemplate which of the above characteristics described above are (a) already a part of your life, and (b) need to become part of your life. List each characteristic that you would like to become part of your life and after it, describe the particular action(s) you would need to take in your life to possess that particular characteristic.

From the list you just created, pick the one characteristic most important to you. Now prayerfully commit yourself to exercising the self-discipline necessary to take the action(s) you described in order to make that characteristic a part of your life. Remember, God has given you the spirit of self – discipline; use it!

Day 5 - Self-Discipline and What I Do

The need for self-discipline applies in a leader’s personal life as well as in the workplace. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend offer some specific advice regarding how this can be done. See Proverbs 12:26 for today’s reading.

Reading - Proverbs 12:26

Discussion - “Sarah heaved a long sigh. She’d been working on major boundary issues in her therapy and was seeing real progress in resolving responsibility conflicts with her parents, husband, and kids. Yet today she introduced a new issue.

“I haven’t told you about this relationship before, though I guess I should have. I have tremendous boundary problems with this woman. She eats too much, and has an attacking tongue. She’s undependable – lets me down all the time. And she’s spent money of mine and hasn’t paid me back in years.’

“Why haven’t you mentioned her before?” I asked.

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“‘Because she’s me,’ Sarah replied” (p.208).*

That story, as told by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, illustrates the need we all have to place boundaries around our lives. We need to form borders that will protect us and enable us to develop. Yet identifying, erecting, and living within those boundaries require personal understanding and self-discipline, especially when those boundaries have to do with changing our own behavior.

Solomon warned about the danger of not exercising self-discipline as we examine our close association with others. He spoke about the “righteous man” who is “cautious in friendship.” The man to whom Solomon referred was intentional about choosing his friendships with care, then continued to examine the nature of those friendships (see also 18:24 and 22:24). Solomon knew the harm that could come to a person who chose not to closely examine the personal effects of a negative, destructive, or even “wicked” friendship.

This kind of self-discipline is challenging because it involves evaluating relationships with other people – some of which are extremely difficult to manage – recognizing their destructive attributes, and then acting to change the nature of the relationship or to cut it off. Doing so requires a great deal of personal self-evaluation and self-discipline, because more often than not a good deal of the relationship dynamic – for good and for ill – has to do with us.

Those who hold leadership positions find themselves in need of establishing boundaries on a daily basis. The constant demands placed on leaders force them to analyze and then prioritize their time and energies. Self-discipline is a character trait that helps leaders evaluate what they’re doing, stop doing what’s harmful, and start doing what’s constructive.

*Taken from *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. Copyright © 1992 by Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

Most of the time we tend to move away from discipline. This is due to a misunderstanding of the word “discipline”. The majority of the time we equate discipline with punishment. In the original Greek, the word “Discipline” conveyed the idea of correction of the body or mind to perfection (becoming sound minded). On the other hand, ‘Punishment’ points out our guilt and is the payment or consequence of breaking a law or rule (sinful conduct). If our motive is the “correction to perfection” of our mind or body, then we are exercising self-discipline.

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It has been said that discipline is the path towards freedom. When we think of self-discipline [self correction of my mind or body to perfection] as a means to be free of harmful thinking and action; when we think of the God's discipline as His means of freeing us from the effects sinful thoughts and actions, then we should welcome discipline and not try to avoid it in our lives.

1. Your only assignment for today is to review this week's study and give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to the extent you use self-discipline in your life. Ask another brother in the Lord (or your spouse, if you are married) to honestly tell you any areas in your life that are lacking in self-discipline. Be thankful and humble (remember our study in humility) in receiving any comment(s). Prayerfully take these issues to the Lord.

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